

Lessons Learned from Boston's Police-Community Collaboration

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Introduction

There's lots in common among reform-minded police departments across America. They all have a base of community policing. They're all delegating authority to fairly small police districts. They're all targeting high crime pockets, some by using the New York developed Compstat computer analyses.

There are differences: Boston for example, limits zero-tolerance crackdowns on minor offenses to high-crime neighborhoods; in New York the police crack down on minor offenses nearly everywhere. And Boston's work with minority communities is much deeper and systematic (Peirce 1997).

BOTH BOSTON and New York City have enjoyed great success in reducing violence levels in their respective inner-city communities. The homicide rates have dropped by 58.7 percent in Boston and 56.1 percent in New York between 1990 and 1996 (Federal Bureau of Investigation 1991-1996). Both cities have used innovative, aggressive law enforcement tactics, but there was a major difference. While New York City's crime reduction success has occurred with virtually no community involvement, Boston has been heavily praised for engaging a community-based network of partners. In fact, Boston has managed to get strong backing for its innovations from people who had been among the most vocal critics of its Police Department.

New York City's police administration has been under fire of late due to several instances of highly publicized abuse and corruption. In many respects, the NYPD's current situation resembles that of the Boston Police Department in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when it was attacked for overly aggressive policing and discrimination against minority inner-city residents. Public outcry in Boston during that period eventually led to major overhauls within the department. As the Boston Police Department has rebuilt its public image and redirected its violence reduction approach, a key emphasis has been the engagement of community partners, especially those from the black clergy community.

Elsewhere, we have argued that the widespread community involvement and public support of Boston's recent law

enforcement tactics could result in the long-term viability of these initiatives (Berrien and Winship 1999; Winship and Berrien 1999). We also suggested that New York City's attack on violent crime, which has been successful thus far, may be undermined by a growing public perception that the administration shows too little concern for individual civil liberties.

In fact, over the past year, the homicide rate in Brooklyn has risen 8 percent (Kaplan 1999). In response to this rise, Brooklyn is turning to Boston for ideas:

After six years of dramatic reductions in crime, murder is back on the rise in Brooklyn, and the chief law-enforcement officers are returning to where they turned for help the last time they had these troubles—Boston.... The new idea, put in motion by Martin and Boston's current police commissioner, Paul F. Evans, involves more systematic coordination among police, probation officers, and community groups to clamp down on gang members (Kaplan 1999).

Boston may possibly be a source of knowledge for other cities as well on how to create effective community-supported police partnerships.

Below, we first briefly describe current relations between New York's law enforcement agencies and the community. We then take a more in-depth look at the Boston situation in order to understand the process through which the city's impressive violence reduction and community collaboration has been achieved. Finally, based on the Boston story, we identify four lessons that may inform other cities on how to achieve community-supported police innovation.

New York City's Success and Rising Public Concern

New York City has perhaps received more media attention than any other city for its accomplishments in reducing violent crime. Significant increases in money and manpower have facilitated the implementation of various labor-intensive strategies to sustain aggressive law enforcement initiatives. Some notable examples of such approaches are the successful and innovative uses of computers to target and attack hot crime spots as well as a "model blocks" program which focuses intense attention on a particular city block until crime is shut down in the defined area.

In the model block program, the police first implement an "all-out drug sweep," then create "checkpoints at both ends of the street, post officers there around the clock, paint over graffiti and help residents organize tenant groups and a block association." Between two and eight police officers patrol the block twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week for the two months following the initial occupation of

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the block. Once it is determined by police officials that drug activity is sufficiently suppressed and formal community organizations are solidified, "model block" status is achieved—meaning that crime has been sufficiently shut-down in that particular block (Halbfinger 1998).¹

Improved relations between the inner city community and the police have not, however, accompanied New York's crime rate successes. According to the *New York Times* report on the police department's model blocks program:

Wary of one another, people hardly put their faith in the police. Tensions between the two have been worse in Washington Heights than anywhere else in the city, from the full fledged riots that followed a police officer's fatal shooting of an unarmed man in 1992, to the April 1997 death of Kevin Cedeno, shot in the back by an officer who was named "cop of the month" by his colleagues soon after. "At least the drug dealers are not here to hurt you—they're here to make a profit," said Yvonne Stennett, who heads the Community League of West 159th Street...increasingly aggressive police tactics have convinced many law-abiding residents that officers see them as criminal suspects first (Halbfinger 1998).

Some residents may even prefer the former levels of crime activity to their current fears of police abuse and discrimination. African-American leaders throughout the city have echoed these complaints. In May 1998 the Reverend Calvin O. Butts III, a prominent Baptist minister from Harlem, went so far as to call Mayor Giuliani a "racist who is on the verge of creating a fascist state in New York City" (Barry 1998). Although some of the city's black leaders did not condone Butts' labeling of the mayor as a racist, they often echoed his complaints regarding Giuliani's treatment of the black community. Several prominent blacks have used confrontational language to criticize policies that they assert are harmful to their community. Both Allen Sharpton and David N. Dinkins, the former mayor, said that they have been leveling essentially the same charges against the Giuliani administration for years. Community outcry against these tactics has been fueled by well-publicized cases of alleged, and in many cases proven, police brutality and corruption.

The forceful and public response to various incidents, including the killing of Amadou Diallo, an unarmed Haitian street vendor in February of 1999, indicates great skepticism by some regarding aspects of current policing tactics in New York City. Mayor Giuliani remains a staunch supporter of his police department. However, the sentiment that the city's impressive crime drop has come at the cost of serious losses in civil liberties may force the mayor to reevaluate his position. If public dismay continues to escalate, the lack of community-based support for police efforts may eventually force a curtailment of current NYPD strategies, in spite of their statistical success.

The Boston Story Part I: The Early Years

Crack and Gangs. Although Boston has never been considered a violence-plagued city to the same extent as Los Angeles or New York, in 1990 a record-breaking 152² homicides stunned Boston with the realization that it had a serious violence problem. The roots of this violence took hold

with the introduction of crack-cocaine into Boston's inner city in 1988, relatively late in comparison to other major U.S. cities. As the crack market developed, so did turf-based gangs. Rival gangs turned to firearms to protect and defend their turf and gang identity. With firearms serving as the primary means of aggression, the level of violence grew to a rate and severity never before seen in the Boston area.

Because Boston law enforcement agencies had little experience with turf-based violence and criminal gang activity, their initial response to the situation in the late 1980s and early 1990s was disorganized. Until 1990, a department-based policy directed police officers and administration to publicly deny the existence of a "gang problem." Because homicide traditionally has been handled on an individual case basis, the police department became primarily focused on making the "big hit" and arresting the "big player," rather than addressing the significance of the group-based quality of gang violence.

In 1988, the City Wide Anti-Crime Unit, traditionally responsible for providing intense, targeted support across district boundaries of the city, was permanently assigned to the most violent neighborhoods of Boston's inner city. The following year the Police Department issued a policy statement that any individual involved in a gang would be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. The department had now acknowledged the existence of a "gang problem." According to one current police captain, the CWACU was expected to "go in, kick butts, and crack heads" and adopted a mentality that "they could do anything to these kids" in order to put an end to their violent activity.

Community Backlash. Two events in 1989, the Carol Stuart murder investigation and the Stop and Frisk scandal, focused community attention on the Police Department's initial approach to the violence crisis. Carol Stuart, a pregnant white woman, was murdered in the primarily African-American neighborhood of Boston's Mission Hill. Her husband, Charles Stuart, who was with her at the time of her death, reported that a black male committed the crime. Relying on Charles Stuart's account, the Boston Police Department "blanketed" the Mission Hill neighborhood looking for suspects. There were widespread reports of police abuse as well as coerced statements that implicated a black male suspect, William Bennet. Charles Stuart himself was later identified as the alleged perpetrator of the crime, but committed suicide before an investigation could be completed. The Boston Police Department's unquestioning acceptance of Charles Stuart's story about a black assailant, and subsequent mishandling of the murder investigation, created an atmosphere of extreme distrust of the department within Boston's African-American community.

This community suspicion was further intensified by the Stop and Frisk scandal, which also occurred in 1989. A public statement by a precinct commander that labeled the then-current police approach to gang-related violence as a "stop and frisk" campaign shocked the community and solidified the public's suspicion of the Boston Police Department. There is some disagreement within the police

department about the extent to which their policy was to indiscriminately stop and frisk all black males within high crime areas, a policy known as “tipping kids upside down.” Accusations of stop and frisk tactics led to a court case in the fall of 1989 in which a judge threw out evidence acquired in what he viewed as an instance of unconstitutional search and seizure.

As a result of the Stuart case and the Stop and Frisk scandal, the CWACU was disbanded in 1990. The department, however, began to see significant rewards from their aggressive street policies as Boston’s homicide rates fell from 103 in 1991 to 73 in 1992 (Federal Bureau of Investigation 1991–1996). This drop reinforced belief in the efficacy of their heavy-handed tactics. The police continued to view their actions as simple compliance with departmental orders. Despite this success, however, most officers acknowledged that the department’s aggressive actions during this time brought community mistrust to an extremely high level.

These two scandals, combined with smaller-scale, less visible incidents, eventually led the Boston press to question the Police Department’s capacity to effectively handle even basic policing activities. In 1991, the *Boston Globe* published a harshly critical four-part series called “Bungling the Basics” (Globe Staff 1992) that detailed a succession of foul-ups by the Boston Police Department during the previous few years. Subsequent stories reported serious failings in the department’s Internal Affairs Division. Misguided investigations, problematic policing, and bad press eventually led to the appointment of the St. Clair Commission to conduct a thorough review of the Boston Police Department and its policies.

At this point, the Boston Police Department was in desperate need of an overhaul to deal with all the negative publicity. Steps were taken to publicly exhibit a changeover in law enforcement policy in Boston. “Bad-seed” cops were weeded out. The disbanded CWACU was reorganized into a new unit, the Anti-Gang Violence Unit (AGVU), which took a “softer” approach, sharply curtailing the aggressive and indiscriminate street tactics of the past. Apparently as a result, the decrease in homicides during 1991 and 1992 was followed by a sharp increase in 1993. In 1993, Mayor Flynn resigned, and Bill Bratton from the New York Police Department replaced Police Commissioner Mickey Roache.

The Boston Story Part II: Later Years

Innovation in Police and Probation Practices.

Bratton brought a new philosophy and a commitment to innovation to the Boston Police Department. Fundamental shifts occurred in its overall operations. The newly organized Anti-Gang Violence Unit looked for new ways of managing gang activities. First, they realized the need for community support and thus were determined to exhibit “squeaky-clean” policing strategies. Previous strategies had also failed to include collaboration with other agencies, so the AGVU began to pursue an increasingly multi-agency approach to combat youth violence. In 1993, the AGVU was

changed to the Youth Violence Strike Force, retaining the same key members (Kennedy 1997b).

Other agencies within Boston’s law enforcement network were concurrently revamping their activities. Certain individuals within the probation department in particular became quite disillusioned with the “paper-shuffling” nature of their jobs. Fearful of the extreme levels of violence in certain Boston districts, probation officers had completely abandoned street presence and home visits. Consequently, there was no enforcement of probation terms such as curfew, area, and activity restrictions. Without enforcement of probation restrictions, a term of probation became viewed as a “slap on the wrist” within the law enforcement community and was essentially ineffectual in combating youth violence.

A few probation officers began to respond to this crisis of ineffectiveness and took strong, proactive measures to readjust their approach. Informal conversations between probation officers and police officers who regularly attended hearings at Dorchester District Court led to an experimental effort in agency collaboration. A strategy labeled “Operation Night Light” was developed to enable probation officers to resume the enforcement component of their job.

On the first outing of the Night Light team, three probation officers and two police officers went out in a patrol car on the night of November 12, 1992. With the protection of their police companions, probation officers were able to venture out after dark and enforce the conditions placed on their probationers. Youths began to realize that they could no longer blatantly disregard the terms of their probation, because their PO might be out on the streets, at their house, or at their hangouts after curfew to check on them. Probation violations would have repercussions, such as lengthened probation sentence, stricter probation terms, or ultimately time in jail. Operation Night Light eventually became an institutionalized practice of Boston law enforcement agencies and has been heavily praised by policy experts and the media across the country.

Inter-agency collaboration to address the issue of youth violence has become standard practice in Boston. Participation of policy researchers (primarily David Kennedy and his associates at the John F. Kennedy School of Government) also served a vital role in bringing about the fundamental overhaul of Boston’s policing strategies. The Boston Gun Project, begun in 1995, was a three-year effort that brought together a wide range of agencies including the Police Department, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, Probation Department, Boston School Police, Suffolk County District Attorney, and many others to address youth violence (Kennedy 1997a).

The Boston Gun Project was innovative, not only for its collaborative nature, but because it utilized research-based information to address the youth violence problem from a new angle. The Gun Project coalition was able to attack the problem at the supply side by cracking down on dealers of illicit firearms. On the demand side, Gun Project research led to the specific targeting of 1300 individuals who represented

less than 1 percent of their age group citywide but were responsible for at least 60 percent of the city's homicides.

This type of inter-agency collaboration helped implement a variety of additional innovative strategies. In 1994, "Operation Scrap Iron" was initiated to target people who were illegally transporting firearms into Boston. Gun trafficking within certain areas of the city was shut down. Additionally, "area warrant sweeps" were used to target dangerous areas. For example, police would arrest all outstanding warrants within a particular housing project. Multi-agency teams of youth and street workers then came in to provide follow-up once police presence subsided. As one police officer noted, these strategies made sure that "everyone was involved and brought something to the table. Everyone had a piece of the pie and, therefore, would get the benefits" (Berrien 1998). Even more impressive is that, according to this same police officer, not one civilian complaint was filed in response to the warrant sweep tactic.

In May of 1996, this collaboration culminated in Operation Cease-Fire. Operation Cease-Fire fully institutionalized inter-agency collaboration among Boston's crime-fighting agencies—Police, Probation, Department of Youth Services, Street Workers, and others. Key community members, primarily from faith-based organizations, were also involved.

Community-based Change. Individuals within Boston's religious community were some of the most vocal and publicized critics of the police department's aggressive tactics during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Reverend Eugene Rivers, in particular, became a controversial figure in the media during these years because of his harsh criticism of both local law enforcement agencies and the city's black leaders. Remarkably, these same religious leaders later became active participants in law enforcement agency strategies such as Operation Cease-Fire.

Boston's faith-based organizations did not begin working together as a group until 1992. Until then, most African-American clergy leaders in Boston had been following separate agendas. Their activities did not generally involve much street-oriented action to address youth violence within their communities. Although Reverend Rivers was on the street establishing strong outreach to gang members and other community youth, his constant criticism of other clergy leaders made his effort a partnerless endeavor.

A tragic event in May 1992 finally spurred collaborative action within Boston's African-American clergy. Violence broke out among gang members attending a funeral for a youth murdered in a drive-by shooting. The shootout and multiple stabbing in the Morning Star Baptist Church threw the service and the congregation into chaos.

The brazenness of this attack, taking place within a church sanctuary, inspired Boston's black clergy to take action. They realized that they could no longer effectively serve their community by remaining within the four walls of their churches and ignoring the situation on the street. Instead, youth and others in the surrounding troubled neighborhoods needed to become extensions of the church congregations.

This incident led to the founding of The Ten-Point

Coalition, a group of some forty churches, with Reverends Ray Hammond, Eugene Rivers, and Jeffrey Brown as the key leaders. A "Ten-Point Proposal for Citywide Mobilization to Combat the Material and Spiritual Sources of Black-on-Black Violence" (Jordan et al. 1992) was drawn up and published as a call to churches to participate in the effort to address the violence crisis in their communities. The creation of the Ten-Point Coalition represented a major step towards active collaboration within Boston's African-American religious community.

The three key pastors in Ten Point serve different types of congregations and have very different personal styles. Reverend Rivers is the pastor of the Azusa Christian Community with a congregation of around 40 members that mostly live within the Four Corners neighborhood of Dorchester. It is sometimes labelled a "store-front church" because of the surprisingly small congregation. Rivers tends to be the most politically outspoken and controversial of the three ministers. Reverend Hammond oversees the Bethel AME church in Dorchester, a much more populous church that attracts people from a variety of neighborhoods to its congregation. Hammond is described as less controversial than Rivers, but equally strong in his convictions and drive for social change. Jeffrey Brown is the minister at the Union Baptist Church in Cambridge. Brown's congregation has several hundred parishioners, but like Rivers, he remains very active in street-based outreach. Brown is sometimes referred to as the "most mature" of the three because he seems able to further his own objectives while maintaining congenial relationships with everyone involved.

As of 1992, the relations between the African-American community leaders and Boston's law enforcement agencies were very strained and often antagonistic. Reverend Rivers was constantly "in the face" of Boston law enforcement and was viewed as a "cop basher" in police circles. He established a constant presence in the troubled streets of Dorchester and made repeated contact with the same kids as the Anti-Gang Violence Unit. As an aggressive advocate for local youth, both in and out of the courts, Rivers had many confrontations with AGVU and other patrol officers.

In time this antagonism would subside and be replaced with effective collaboration. The turnaround resulted from a combination of influential events and the strong effort made by key law enforcement officials to show that the Boston Police Department had a new attitude. In 1991 shots were fired into Reverend Rivers' home in Four Corners, one of the most violent areas of Dorchester, making him painfully aware of the dangers of carrying out a solitary campaign against youth violence. He has acknowledged that seeing the lives of his wife and children placed in jeopardy caused a shift in his attitude. He became more open to the possibility of allying with both other ministers and individuals in the law enforcement community.

When Reverend Rivers and other key clergy members such as Ray Hammond and Jeffrey Brown formed the Ten-Point Coalition in 1992, their public stature and media influ-

ence increased. They wielded their power effectively to maintain a check on police practices in Boston by establishing an organized, community-based, police monitoring group, the Police Practices Coalition.

The Ten-Point Coalition, and especially Reverend Rivers, had habitually criticized the Boston Police Department. Increasingly positive interactions with individual officers, however, began to convince the clergy group that the department could change their behavior. The ministers acknowledged the department's progress in an awards ceremony called the "People's Tribunal," initiated in 1992 to publicly honor "good cops." These positive steps eventually led to collaborative efforts like the previously mentioned Operation Cease-Fire. Cooperation among law enforcement agencies and clergy leaders, as well as various community-based groups, has continued to evolve and expand during recent years.

Boston Story Part III: Current Relations

Currently, there is extensive inter-agency and community-based collaboration in Boston. A primary venue for this work is the Bloods and Crips Initiative. It was established in Spring 1998 as an aggressive street-level mobilization of lay and pastoral workers to intervene in and prevent youth involvement in Bloods, Crips, or any other gang activity. By combining the effort of a wide range of agency representatives, the Initiative aims to approach the problem comprehensively.

Boston Police, Boston Probation, Department of Youth Services, clergy members, city Street and Youth Workers, Mass Bay Transit Authority Police, the School Department, and School Police meet weekly to share information on important developments on the street. For example, several disturbing incidents of sexual assault and harassment have occurred recently on the city's public transportation system. MBTA police and city youth workers as well as clergy brought up the importance of addressing these incidents at the weekly Bloods and Crips Initiative meetings. A task force on sexual harassment and assault was established in order to address these issues effectively. School presentations on the subject are planned in the future.

Another objective of this collaboration is to exhibit strong, supportive, and unified authority to the targeted youth. This is achieved through the participation of multiple agencies and clergy representatives in all of the initiative's activities: school visits and presentations, home visits to youth suspected of gang involvement, regular street patrols, and a strong presence in popular "hang-out" areas during peak hours. The collaborative approach serves to notify youth of alternative options and brings them into contact with a network of resources designed to serve their specific needs.

More informal cooperation among the wide array of agencies and community groups participating in operations such as the Bloods and Crips Initiative plays an important role in achieving quick responses to tense situations, and effective distribution of resources to problematic "hot-spots" in the city. In 1998, for example, a particular youth

repeatedly instigated dangerous confrontations in Dorchester—holding a gun to another youth's head; firing shots in the air in the midst of young "trick-or-treaters" on Halloween night, shooting holes in parked cars—all within a period of a couple of weeks. Each incident had the potential to aggravate pre-existing tensions among various neighborhood "crews" and destroy any sense of community security. Because of this risk, Reverend Rivers utilized his connections with law enforcement to ensure a quick and effective handling of the situation.

Lessons Learned

Significantly, Boston has been praised as much for its effective partnership with community leaders as for its reduction in homicide rates. Clergy representatives have served as the primary community partners, and with their support the Boston Police Department has been able to use innovative tactics without provoking a backlash. Four factors in particular were critical to the success of the Boston experience: 1) preemptive and direct communication with community partners; 2) identifying and channeling the power of a catalytic/focus event; 3) establishing and nurturing legitimacy in the eyes of former critics representing the community perspective; and 4) acknowledgment of mutual responsibility for improving the situation of violence on the street.

Forceful criticism from the public can paralyze police efforts; it can also lead to dramatic change. Public and media criticism surrounding the Carol Stuart murder investigation did much to bring about the disassembly of an entire police unit (the CWACU), and helped trigger the installation of a new police administration. Boston's crime fighting agencies are now an emblem of success in the field of community-based engagement in police endeavors.

Preemptive and Direct Communication. Key decision-makers in the Boston Police Department now consult Reverend Rivers and other members of the Ten-Point Coalition prior to any major police action in their neighborhood. This preemptive action has three benefits. First, the key community members feel that they are being included in major decisions and that their needs are being considered by law enforcement officials. In addition, clergy representatives have first-hand knowledge of the situations on the street that may lead law enforcement officials to redirect their approach or change their tactics. Finally, regular conversations with each other solidify relationships and build trust between the two groups.

A recent example of this preemptive communication is the handling of a surge in violence within Boston's Cape Verdean community. Law enforcement officials and community members alike were alarmed at the shocking number of violent incidents that had already taken place early in 1999. Some sort of action from law enforcement was necessary. Leaders of the Youth Violence Strike Force were contemplating a forceful action that would consist of an INS sweep, with the threat of deportation for certain youth. This was a targeted attack; the police conducting the sweep

were sure they "had the right guys," each with several offenses.

Before taking such a potentially controversial action, however, the lead police officer in this investigation consulted members of the Ten-Point Coalition and leaders from the Cape Verdean community. First, he wanted to find out how such a move would be received: Were people so fed up with the level of violence that they were open to a forceful and decisive action? Second, he hoped that conducting outreach in the Cape Verdean community would help prepare them for the shock of such an aggressive enforcement approach. Although the move was controversial, advance communication helped abate community concern and cope with potential resentment.

Channel the power of a catalytic event. Several crucial events, such as the shooting at the Morning Star Baptist Church and the McLaughlin murder investigation, had much to do with Boston's progression towards partnership and successful innovation. It was not the events themselves, however, but the effective responses by the key ministers and law enforcement leaders which led to great progress.

One example is the way that Boston law enforcement officials and Ten-Point Coalition ministers used their response to the McLaughlin murder to solidify and publicly display their new-found cooperation. On September 25, 1995, a white Assistant Attorney General, Paul McLaughlin, was shot and killed on his way home from work. The murder appeared to be a "hit" in retaliation for McLaughlin's work against gangs. Soon after the crime, the police released a vague, controversial description of the assailant as a "black male, about 14 or 15 years old, 5 foot 7, wearing a hooded sweatshirt and baggy jeans" (Chacon 1995). There was immediate concern that this description could easily be applied to many young black males. Many law enforcement personnel and inner-city residents feared that this would escalate to the same kind of explosive, racially charged situation that arose during the Carol Stuart murder investigation.

Instead of allowing the incident to chip away at their new collaboration, law enforcement and the black clergy community responded in a manner that actually helped solidify their standing as partners in the effort to stop youth violence. Like the Morning Star Shooting, the McLaughlin Murder was a very well-publicized event. Both law enforcement officials and the leaders of the Ten-Point Coalition came out early and publicly to express their sadness about the crime, as well as their mutual support for a fair, well-run and effective investigation.

The day after the murder occurred, the executive committee of the Ten-Point Coalition publicly condemned the murder at a press conference. They expressed concern for the McLaughlin family and placed strong emphasis on bringing the city together to avoid the threat of polarization:

"We ask the city as a whole to step back and not allow their conscious or unconscious fears to drive what happens," Rev. Hammond said, "This is a time for the city of Boston to come together and to make it clear that we will not be held hostage by either perpetrators of violence or by

those who would exploit the fear of violence to promote more racial division" (*The Ten Point Coalition*, 1995).

Ten-Point ministers also forcefully advocated an aggressive, but fair investigation of the murder: "Thus we wholeheartedly support all legal efforts to apprehend the perpetrators of this brutal crime" (*The Ten Point Coalition* 1995).

The ministers' stance indicated that a group that had previously been highly critical of the Boston Police Department now had faith in the fairness of their enforcement strategies. According to one police source, by the time of the McLaughlin murder, the "clergy viewed them (the police) as a much different police force," and were confident that the department would carry out a "professional investigation." Clergy representatives say that there was a profound "attitudinal change" behind their resolution to allow the police force to conduct the investigation without voicing opposition. The leaders of the black community felt that there had been a fundamental change in police practices that enabled them to "back the case," according to law enforcement officials and ministers involved.

The tactics and investigative approach of Boston's law enforcement officials during this tense period showed marked differences from the time of the Stuart murder. Both clergy and police representatives were very sensitive to the delicate implications of a racially charged case. Police Commissioner Paul F. Evans immediately made a statement to address community fears about a repeat of the chaos that surrounded the Stuart investigation. "I'm concerned about the potential for this limited description (of the assailant) to become divisive. We're not going to let that happen. This will be a professional investigation" (Anand and Grunwald 1995). The commissioner spoke on a radio station with a largely black audience soon after the murder, to emphasize the limited value of the vague assailant description, and to say that an effective investigation depended on cooperation between the police and the community. The commissioner also joined the ministers at the Ten-Point Coalition's press conference in an additional illustration of police cooperation, rather than antagonism, with the African-American community. Thus, both the ministers and law enforcement officials responded in a way that emphasized the extent of their partnership, made the cooperation public, showed the community that they worked together and that each was respected by the other. They also used media attention, which was readily available, to show that the precedent had changed in police-community interaction; there would be no more repeats of the Carol Stuart investigation.

Gain legitimacy in the eyes of former critics. Reverend Rivers and other members of the Ten-Point Coalition were some of the harshest critics of Boston police during the early 1990s. After the department's controversial handling of the Carol Stuart murder investigation and the Stop and Frisk scandal during the early 1990s, they became very suspicious of police intentions, and were quick on the trigger in attacking police actions. As the Ten-Point Coalition gained more influence, its attacks garnered widespread media political attention. Reverend Rivers had a rep-

utation as a “cop basher” who found fault with most police activities, so improving the legitimacy of the police force in his eyes was an important prerequisite to enabling community-supported police innovation.

Reverend Rivers gives former Police Commissioner Bill Bratton a good deal of credit for realizing that he needed to make his relationship with the black clergy of Boston a priority. Although gaining the trust of a former adversary is not a straightforward task, certain identifiable tactics were used by Boston Police’s key figures. After much upheaval, the Boston Police Department in 1993 was finally reorganizing its enforcement efforts to be more oriented towards community-based and problem-oriented policing. However, the department had to *prove* it had reformed before the critics would really believe it.

With both the Morning Star Baptist Church shooting and the first shooting at Reverend Rivers’ house, probation officers from the Dorchester District Court were able to identify the perpetrators. The Boston Police and Probation Departments handled these investigations promptly and successfully. By taking extra care in carrying out these investigations, Boston’s law enforcement agencies were able to exhibit both their respect for the black clergy community and their revamped enforcement strategies.

Commissioner Bratton also made a special effort to invite clergy members such as Reverend Rivers to important meetings regarding incidents that would be of interest to, and would benefit from the input of, local community leaders. According to Rivers, “Bratton was shrewd enough to know that if he gets the backing of the black community, then he can do aggressive law enforcement.” He targeted the clergy community because they were outspoken, powerful, had direct ties to the *Boston Globe* editorial section, and were respected by the wider inner-city community. Because this particular community had been harshly critical of the police department in the past, their endorsement carried more credibility. By acknowledging their importance and working hard to gain their trust, Bratton decreased the bad press circulated about the Boston Police Department and revamped the department’s tarnished public image.

Acknowledge mutual responsibility. A unique and crucial aspect of the Boston partnership is that both law enforcement and Ten-Point leaders acknowledged they have a mutual responsibility to create a solution to youth violence. This responsibility entails both supporting youth and maintaining enforcement and discipline when youth overstep boundaries. Typically, leaders of inner-city communities see themselves primarily as “protectors” of their communities against police actions. Racial tension and past injustices have led to the assumption that local law enforcement cannot be trusted to act fairly or in the best interest of the community. For their part, police typically focus their actions on the punitive side and do not often offer preventive alternatives to youth offenders. In Boston over the past few years, the local clergy and law enforcement have found an alternative standard of behavior in which they take on mutual responsibility as both advocates and enforcers.

Ten-Point ministers formed their coalition in large part to advocate for inner-city youth. When Reverend Rivers first began his outreach work in 1988, he wanted to provide strong, vocal support for those without advocates: young black males. He believed even offenders were entitled to his support, because they had no one else on their side. However, after gaining more experience with a wide spectrum of youthful offenders, and having his own house shot at four times, Reverend Rivers and his colleagues discovered that there were some they could not reach, who were simply too dangerous to remain on the street. This realization led them to become more selective about who they fought for in court.

As the clergy community began to have more trust in the fairness and legality of the Boston Police Department’s tactics, they no longer felt the need to defend their community’s youth indiscriminately. The leaders of the Ten-Point Coalition remain staunch supporters of local youth. However, when a particular individual is out of control and becomes a clear danger to the surrounding community, and repeated efforts to reach out have been unsuccessful, clergy may be willing to assist the police in removing that individual from the street. Sometimes getting a severely out-of-control youth off the street means saving his or her life and possibly the lives of their neighbors. Increased trust in local law enforcement, therefore, has allowed the ministers and their colleagues to be more realistic and selective in their advocacy efforts. By acknowledging that not all youth can be saved through outreach and mentoring efforts, they have increased their credibility when they do support specific youth.

At the same time, the Boston Police Department has made efforts to offer preventive alternatives for inner city youth. The department has helped provide several hundred summer jobs for high-risk youth throughout the city. It has set up a basketball league for local youth, which includes a game between community youth and police officers. An example of the increasingly preventive nature of the Boston Police Department’s approach is the Bloods and Crips Initiative, in which personnel from the Youth Violence Strike Force, Probation, the Department of Youth Services, and clergy representatives have visited all of the Boston Public Schools to talk about the perils of gang involvement. During these presentations the officers offer their help in finding alternatives to gang activity. They also encourage the youth to visit the member churches of the Ten-Point Coalition for support, mentoring, outreach activity and information about job opportunities.

Through each group’s acknowledgment of the necessity of the other’s traditional role, they gain mutual credibility and trust for each other. Ministers acknowledge that some youth’s needs are beyond the scope of their outreach work, and for the safety of themselves and the community, a particular youth may need to be removed from danger, and sent to jail. Likewise law enforcement officers acknowledge that certain youth might better be turned around by mandatory community service in Reverend Rivers’ church, rather than jail. The partnership is strengthened because they respect

each other's purpose and intentions. Youth are better served, because their needs are being more carefully thought through and met. This mutual acknowledgment has been crucial to the successful partnership found in Boston's crime fighting collaboration.

Conclusion

First and foremost, the Boston story teaches that community support is crucial to creating a positive public reception to police innovation. Although there is no easy way to achieve such an exemplary situation of community-based partnership as found in Boston, in this paper we have identified four "lessons learned" that can potentially help other cities work towards that objective. By engaging in preemptive and direct communication with their community partners, taking advantage of the energy behind catalytic events, working to gain legitimacy in the eyes of a former critic, and acknowledging mutual responsibility to reduce violence, Boston has come to a unique and highly effective strategy for long-lasting violence reduction.

As evidenced by Brooklyn's recent decision to pursue the "Boston Plan," long-lasting success in crime reduction is difficult to achieve without some level of community-based support and input.

Throughout New York City, all felonies except murder are continuing their slide downward. The murder rate is up 8 percent in the last year—and most of that rise is from a few precincts in Brooklyn, where youth gangs are suddenly acting boldly and guns are flowing freely again... "We always had the Boston Plan on the back burner," Hynes (Brooklyn District Attorney) said after his news conference. "But everything seemed to be working well"—until last summer. So he asked Martin to come down and brief New York's police commissioner, Howard Safir. (Kaplan 1999)

New York, a city that has gained national attention for dramatic reductions in violence, is turning to Boston for advice. Boston has found a way to achieve dramatic reductions in violent crime while making equally strong efforts to build partnerships with the community. Computer-based technology, aggressive initiatives, and preventive tactics are all important. However, if the community is at odds with local law enforcement agencies, these innovations will be less likely to bring about long-term improvement. Without community input and collaboration, local law enforcement

efforts may be hindered by community backlash, and they will miss out on the benefit of community input during their investigations and planning processes.

NOTES

¹A more in-depth discussion of New York City's Model Block program can be found in McCoy (1999).

²The Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports state that 143 homicides were committed in Boston in 1990. However, current Boston Police statistics and current police officers report 152 homicides for the record breaking year.

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